

BERTHA'S RESPONSIBILITY.

The chilliness and the dreariness of the morning were reflected in Bertha Allan's face. She came down stairs before the breakfast bell rang, and busied herself picking the faded leaves from the house plants. The broad window bench of the quaint, old-fashioned room gave ample accommodation for the flower-pots, both as to sunlight and room; but the transfer from the out-of-doors flower stand to the warm air of the dining room caused the bright green summer foliage to fall, and Bertha had sighed a little over the nakedness of the branches. But it was not the dead leaves that caused the sober cast of her face that morning, for the girl's thoughts were not keeping her fingers company, neither was she thinking of the light snowfall of the night, which would make her walk to school a disagreeable one. Her thoughts were not pleasant ones—in fact, it was a case of conscience! She gave a little impatient shrug of her shoulders as she said to herself:

"I just wish that temperance legion had never been thought of. Folks seem to think that if a girl does not join it she is hardly respectable—boys can stay out, and people are sorry, and try to plan a way to draw them in; but if a girl stays out, people shake their heads and appear to think she is lacking in moral sense! And since they started up this senior grade business one can't have the excuse that it is too juvenile. But I am not going to sign any pledge? There is all that lovely homemade wine down cellar and the cider that father prepared and bottled. I say it is a great nuisance. Then, to make matters worse, Miss Smith said yesterday that our John and Charlie Betts were holding back for me—that they would sign if I did; and the way she put it, if they turn out drunkards—the idea of our John and Charlie Betts doing that is absurd—but if they should, then I am to bear the blame. That is putting a pretty heavy load on a girl's shoulders. Dear me, I wish I didn't have to think about it. I have decided and I don't intend to change—it shows a weak mind to be constantly making up one's mind one way, and then changing and making it up another way. There are girls enough who like the plan who can influence those boys."

The breakfast coming in, followed by the family, interrupted this train of thought. Conversation did not start off very briskly that morning. Bertha was in no mood to meet her brother's lively sallies, and Mr. Allen seemed to be somewhat troubled, and his wife watched him anxiously. Presently he said:

"John, I hope you will drop your in-

timacy with Charlie Betts. As I came up street last evening I saw him coming out of a saloon smoking a cigarette. A boy who frequents such places and smokes is no companion for my boys."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Allen, "Charlie Betts seems such a nice boy; he is the last one I should expect to see going wrong. And he has been so carefully brought up, too!"

John said nothing, but his father noticed that a sullen look was coming into the boy's face, and he feared that his admonition would not avail to keep his own son from the companionship of Charlie Betts. The boys had been playmates always, and it was not likely that John would give up his friend without a struggle. Mr. Allan continued:

"I hear there is a new Young People's Temperance Society started. I don't believe in pledges for most people, but I think that if any of the movers of this society can get hold of Charlie, they will be doing a good work."

Bertha caught her brother's meaning glance, and she hastily rose from the table saying: "Mamma, please excuse me; I'll be late to school."

Up in her room she exclaimed: "There it is again! Even father thinks somebody will be to blame if Charlie Betts goes to destruction. I wonder what he would do if he knew that his own daughter is the so-called responsible person!"

A little later, as she came down stairs, her father and mother were in the hall talking very earnestly.

"Bertha," said Mr. Allan, "I wonder if you cannot influence your brother. He seems unwilling to give up going with Charlie, and I'm afraid he will be drawn into bad ways."

"I am sure I don't know what I can do," returned Bertha, impatiently, though her conscience was saying, "You do know exactly what you can do."

At school Bertha heard much about the new temperance society, and a dozen times she was asked if she expected to join the Seniors, and if she supposed John would join.

Going home from school, she went up to her room and "had it out," as she said. "John will if I will, and if John will Charlie will!" Over and over she said this; and after a weary fight with herself, she arose to her feet, and letting her clenched hand fall heavily upon the table, she said: "I will—I've got to!"

The next morning, Mrs. Allan said: "Bertha, you haven't looked well for two days. I think a glass of that blackberry wine might tone you up a little. I will get you some."

"Excuse me, mamma, and I thank you, but I don't want it." Then, with desperate energy in her voice, she turned to her brother: "John, go around by Mr. Betts's and get Charlie, and we will go to Miss Smith's and put our names down this very morning. I'll meet you at the corner."

"All right! I said I would if you did, though I didn't think you'd give in. But I won't go back on my word; neither will Charlie."

John was off before either father or mother took in the situation, but, as the door closed behind him, Mr. Allan asked in wonder: "What is it?"

"Father," said Bertha, "you said I was to help John. There is just this way to do it—go and join the temperance society. It means signing the pledge that you don't believe in, but it has got to be done. He and Charlie will if I do, and John will never give up Charlie; where one goes they both go, and it seems I am the one they will follow just at this point. So no more homemade wine or boiled cider for us."

Mr. Allen attempted to expostulate, but the words died on his lips. In the face of Bertha's vehement explanation he could not say that pledges might be all very well for some people, but were not necessary for his children.

And not a bottle of that homemade wine or bottled cider has been opened since that eventful morning when John and Bertha signed the pledge.—*Temperance Banner*.

TWO FAMOUS EPIGRAMS.

The late Nathaniel Deering, of Portland, Maine, began his career as a lawyer, many years ago, in the little town of Canaan, in the backwoods of his native State. Among his acquaintances and neighbors was Mrs. L. M. Child, afterward a distinguished authoress.

Being challenged one day by Mr. Deering to produce a stanza in which his name should be one of the rhyming words, Mrs. Child took pencil and paper, and at once replied as follows:—

Whoever weds the young lawyer at C.
Will surely have prospects most cheering.
For what must his person and intellect be
When even his name is *N. Deering*?

As good, perhaps, as the foregoing, but no better, was the quatrain upon Gen. George P. Morris, the author of "Woodman, Spare That Tree," written, on the instant, under a similar challenge, by John Brougham, the actor:—

All hail, thou gifted son,
The warrior-poet, Morris!
'Tis seldom that we meet in one
A *Cæsar* and a *Horace*.